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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PDPA DALTON, MITCHELL AND SIMS AND INR/R/MR

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TAGS: PREL PHUM KPAO KMDR ZI

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION MASS ACTION IN ZIM; HARARE

¶1. The week-long mass action, called by the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) aimed at forcing Robert Mugabe to address the economic and political crisis afflicting the country, remains the mainstay for editorials being carried in the mainstream media. Excerpts follow:

¶2. Under headline "The final nail on the economy" the independent daily "The Daily News" (06/06) comments:

"The government's forcible opening of companies heeding the opposition mass action to stay shut this week and threats to deregister these firms could be the final nail on an economy already on the brink of total collapse. When the dust of the harsh clampdown on the mass action and on these companies has settled down, the cost of the government's high-handedness will only then unfold, and many in the administration could have a rude awakening. . . It is not the companies which will be the eventual losers in this high-stakes game, but the government itself, Zimbabwe and its people. . . ."

¶3. Under headline "Regime clinging to power by force" the independent weekly "The Zimbabwe Independent" (06/06) comments:

". . . If the MDC is unable to assemble its supporters in town centers, its leadership is at least able to call a successful strike whenever it likes. No amount of threats by ministers. . . could get people to work. . . At the end of the week the impression that remained was one of a desperately insecure regime using every means at its disposal. . . to get the country back to work. . . The reality, which the world was able to observe this week, was of a regime that is only able to survive by brute force. . . We are all agreed that by its campaign this week the MDC has drawn the attention of the country and the world to the connection between brutal misrule and economic collapse. That is the issue successfully dramatized by its followers in the teeth of repression and which can no longer be ignored, not even by the delusionist in State House."

¶4. Under headline "The West in discord" the government-controlled daily "Chronicle" (06/06) comments:

". . . While the Western self-appointed anointers of African rulers have consistently refused to 'bless' our President's victory in the 2002 election, the same 'angels. . . , have decided to see legitimacy in the mass action organized by MDC, when the action was declared illegal by the High Court. . . The Western governments decide to close their eyes so that they see no evil and hear no evil. They are mum about the beatings of demonstrators in their backyards but are quick to chastise Zimbabwe for breaking up demonstrations organized by a party that is in possession of a High Court order outlawing the action. . . The people of this country will never surrender their sovereignty to a bunch of leaders who have never been elected by Zimbabweans. . . ."

SULLIVAN